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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR KERNAN ANNOUNCES PREFERRED CORRIDOR FOR U.S. 31 FREEWAY
Public Hearings scheduled on Draft Environmental Impact Statement

(CARMEL) – Lieutenant Governor Joe Kernan today unveiled the preferred alternative – alternative “F” – for the proposed upgrade of U.S. 31 in Hamilton County. The choice was based on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which identifies the existing right of way of the highway as the preferred alternative.

“The upgrade of U.S. 31 will ease Hoosiers’ travels, but it will also boost the Indiana economy,” Kernan said. “Our infrastructure is one of our economic advantages over our competitors, and we must continue to build on that strength. This project does just that.”

“The preferred alignment will reduce congestion, improve safety and provide more reliable and efficient mobility for commerce and travel,” INDOT Commissioner J. Bryan Nicol said. “INDOT’s long-range plan to upgrade the U.S. 31 corridor provides for an improved direct connection between Indianapolis and north central Indiana.”

Alternative ‘F’ requires the least amount of new right-of-way and results in the fewest impacts to agricultural land, forestland, floodplains and wetlands. The six options for variations of interchange combinations put the estimated total cost at between \$426 and \$434 million.

“Because of its many benefits, the investment in improving U.S. 31 to interstate standards between Indiana's two largest markets would be repaid many times over,” Kernan added. “More than \$700 billion of goods are shipped on Indiana's Interstate highways annually. As we court new companies and expansions of existing companies, we continue to find that our great infrastructure is an economic advantage for Indiana, the U.S. 31 project will enhance that advantage.”

The proposed freeway will feature three travel lanes in each direction with interchanges at I-465, 106th Street, 116th Street, 136th Street, 146th Street, 161st Street, State Road 32 (S.R. 32), 191st Street and State Road 38 (S.R. 38). There will be an interchange at either 126th Street or 131st Street, but not at both. A single alternative identifying the preferred interchange options will be selected and presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

The full DEIS is available for review at INDOT’s Central Office in Indianapolis and Greenfield District office, the Westfield library and Town Hall, the Carmel library and City Hall and the U.S. 31 Study office located at 11405 North Pennsylvania Street in Carmel. It is also available on the Internet at the official project Web site, { HYPERLINK "<http://www.us31indiana.com/>" } .

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A public hearing on the DEIS is scheduled for June 30 at Carmel High School, located at 520 E. Main St. in Carmel. There will be an informal, open-house session as the doors open at 5:00 p.m., followed by a formal presentation on the alternatives and their impacts at 6:00 p.m. Immediately following the presentation, a formal comment session for those who wish to speak and have their comments recorded will commence. The public is encouraged to submit written comments on the DEIS electronically at the project Web site or by U.S. Mail during the 45-day comment period that runs through August 4, 2003.

After reviewing public and agency comments submitted during the comment period, the FEIS will be published. In late 2003 or early 2004, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is expected to issue a Record of Decision (ROD) on the selected alternative. Following that determination, final design, right-of-way acquisition and construction can begin.

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